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FICTION SUPPLEMENT.

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THE CHARACTER AND TENDENCY OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION.

THE critic who undertakes to summarize the qualities, and indicate the tendencies, of contemporary fiction has not an easy task. He can scarcely pretend to have an exhaustive acquaintance with a branch of literature so bewildering in extent and variety. He must confess to the exercise of selection, and own that any kind of selection may involve omissions of capital importance. Still, in the condition of the English novel at the present time there are several salient and peculiar characteristics, which seem to point to the possibility of a generalization neither hopelessly vague nor hopelessly inept.

The "average" novel, the mere literary narcotic, of one period is, of course, very like that of another. It is only on consideration of the comparatively small output of really high artistic purpose that one is compelled to ascribe to the fiction of our day a definite character of its own. Such consideration, however, does convince us that the novel as treated at present by such comparatively young men as Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy, such positively young men as Mr. Cannan and Mr. Walpole, has certain general peculiarities both of matter and manner which distinguish it sharply from the English novel of any previous period. Fiction at the present moment exhibits a seriousness of aim, a tendency to social criticism, a tentativeness of form, and a fusion of earlier

methods which all suggest that it is in a transitional period. Many of its characteristics are the direct or indirect result of the practice of the later Victorian writers. It will be advantageous, therefore, to institute a comparison between the fiction of to-day and the fiction (let us say) of twenty-five years ago.

In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the English novel may be divided into three main groups. "Realism" dominated one of these, and, accepted as a condition by Mr. Hardy, followed as an evangel by Mr. Moore, was probably the most important and fruitful force of the period. Romance had still a masterly exponent in Meredith, though his romantic view of life was tempered by a keen critical faculty; and a powerful (if unorthodox) exponent in Mr. Kipling, whose supposed alliance with "realism" was of the left hand only. Meanwhile, with the work of Mrs. Humphry Ward the novel was beginning to claim for itself the right to criticize contemporary life, and to attempt the solution of current "problems"—religious, social, and ethical.

The fiction of our own day shows no such definite cleavage, and is patient of no such convenient classification. Its leading examples combine the qualities of all the three above divisions with certain modifications of method, so that in the work of most of the younger men we find realism, romance, and criticism blended into a new complex—one, by the way, typical of the modern distaste for categorical thinking. Mr. Wells, for instance, perhaps the most interesting and representative of our living novelists, holds equally of all three traditions. His material is usually of a frankly "realistic" nature; but normal lower and middle-class life appears to him as neither colourless nor prosaic. It is, on the contrary, instinct to his imagination with incalculable possibilities of romance and adventure. He finds it "not grey, but golden." Moreover, he handles it with none of the impersonal aloofness of the academic realist. He is eager to generalize upon it, and subject it to criticism. He has realized that "problems" are an integral part of our mental outfit, and he is curious to trace and depict their formative influence upon character. He differs, however, from the aforesome "problem" novelist by a desire rather to represent men and women as moulded by the vexed questions of to-day than to supply answers to the vexed questions themselves. He has modified the method of Mrs. Ward as much as he has modified the method of Meredith or Mr. Moore. Mr. Arnold Bennett is a less, but hardly less, marked example of similar tendencies. He chronicles the detail of life as meticulously, with as subdued an emphasis, as the authors of "Jude the Obscure" and of "A Mummer's Wife"; but his chronicle is informed (as theirs are not) by a sense of progress. The lives whose evolution he develops are chapters in a history of civilization not planned or written

from the standpoint of the pessimist. His men and women find their romance in their advance to clearer apprehension and stronger control of a world which in the intimate conviction of their creator is somehow good.

This fusion of method and critical absorption in the conditions and forces of modernity have produced valuable work besides that of Mr. Wells and Mr. Bennett. Under similar influences Mr. Onions has analyzed with fine irony the mind of the commercial and political *arriviste*; Mr. Galsworthy has given us his studies of that curious increase of sensibility and widening of imaginative sympathy partially (but only partially) expressed by the term "social conscience"; Mr. E. M. Forster has exploited the fundamental opposition between the perceptive and imperceptible, the dynamic and static temperaments, an opposition immemorial, indeed, but only now beginning to be estimated at its full importance. We are not, let it be remembered, proposing these writers for admiration as possessors of unparalleled genius, or assigning to their achievement a unique value. We are concerned only to signalize their break with Victorian categories of method, and their closeness to contemporary life.

Ours is emphatically a day of profound and rapid changes, mental and material, and in a common sense of change and the need of readjustment the group we have selected as typical exhibits another bond of union. Each member of it, according to his idiosyncrasy, has been impressed by the alteration in thought and the control over life wrought by the last two decades. And this, it would seem, will not be a diminishing force in the future. The novel as a register of change will in all likelihood increase and multiply, and with its ever-widening field of observation will come of necessity developments and variations of form and manner. Some of them are already apparent. Mr. Wells, in his analysis of the contemporary mind, as influenced by the opening of huge vistas of progress, and burdened with the task of constructive thought, has been led to invent the peculiar discursive and autobiographical form of fiction which has given us "Tono Bungay," "The New Machiavelli," and "The Passionate Friends." Mr. Bennett, proposing to himself the portrayal of men and women very gradually brought into touch with modernity, has found himself obliged to dispense with "plot" (in the accepted sense of the term), to trace the growth of his characters from adolescence far into middle age, and, transcending the limits of the single book, to launch out into the trilogy. In Mr. Galsworthy's curious technique, with its perpetual shifting of the centre of interest and its (at first sight) irrelevant introduction of purely occasional characters, we divine the compulsion laid upon him by his sense of the need for a finer and wider edge to our more intimate personal and social relationships. Mr. Onions, Mr. Forster,

and Mr. Cannan, all in one way or another, by their treatment of the fictional form, express their conviction that the novel is occupied with the assimilation of wholly new material.

Whether these developments will so affect the "kind" as eventually to transform it into something utterly strange is an interesting question, and one that may well haunt readers of such books as Mr. Wells's 'Passionate Friends' or Mr. Cannan's 'Old Mole.' Each book does show a tendency to pass into a mere discussion, to extend the parabasis to the extinction of the play. Neither was published when, a few months ago, Prof. Saintsbury raised the disquieting suggestion that the English novel, like the English poetic drama, may have completed its full cycle, and already be on its way to a natural death. But both might be held to give that suggestion support. In its period of adaptation to new circumstances and new needs the novel is certainly not immune from dangers. We must not forget, however, that the element of discourse has been inherent in much of our best fiction since the days of Fielding, and that a certain loss of balance and proportion in its employment is not necessarily a fatal symptom. Again, it is hardly likely that the attention of nearly all the more serious among our younger writers can remain focussed, as it is today, upon the social life and social questions of our own country. Since the beginning of the century we have, as a nation, been absorbed by self-criticism and the attempt to re-orient ourselves to new conditions. The novel has only proved its adaptability and vitality by reflecting the process. As our interests change and widen, there seems no valid reason to doubt that it will prove itself capable of their assimilation and interpretation. Its freedom of form, however, and its critical spirit are likely to be permanent, since they correspond to the general trend of thought. Wayward spirits, we devoutly hope, there will always be to delight us with their fantasies as we are delighted by Mr. Algernon Blackwood or Mr. Temple Thurston; strong spirits to simplify and recreate our vexed minds as they are simplified and re-created by Mr. Conrad, to whose genius, now at last, we hope, recognized by a wider public, the standpoint of this essay involves a grossly inadequate tribute.

But the main trend of the novel seems to us to lie for many years ahead in the direction we have indicated. On the whole, there is little to regret in the fact, if it prove one. Fiction may not, indeed, prove, as Mr. Wells claims in a recent pronouncement, the most potent literary instrument for a necessary clarification of our thought and extension and deepening of our sympathies, but in wise hands it should do very much for the furtherance of those aims.

La Révolte des Anges. Par Anatole France. (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 3fr. 50.)

THIS new novel of Anatole France will not go far to conciliate those critics who have found fault with the licence he usually allows himself in treating of love and religion, and those who are not prepared to see these topics dealt with in an ultra-Voltairean spirit would be well advised not to attempt its perusal. The author belongs to the class of Mr. Morley Roberts's "religious atheists" to whom all religions are of equal validity, and he sees no reason why the mythology of one of them should be more sheltered from parody than another. In this novel he has chosen to parody, not Christianity indeed, but the popular mixture of Milton and Gnosticism which treats of the relationship of the fallen angels and the Deity. He describes a blindly conservative hierarchical heaven in which progress is neither possible nor desired, and a world in which the fallen angels have brought about all human improvements by their ceaseless struggle for betterment, till it has, at its best, far passed the intellectual level of the paradise of Milton. In this world the guardian angels who enter into the life of their charges may become imbued with the spirit of revolt and fall from their high position. The career of such a one is here recounted.

The story opens in a large private library in Paris, where the librarian has elaborated a class catalogue of such appalling complexity that he has effectively choked off all would-be borrowers, and sits all day rejoicing over his well-filled shelves. One morning, however, he finds a heap of his most valuable treasures, which he had left in their places the night before, in disorder on the table; and whatever precautions he takes, the same thing happens again and again. Soon he begins to miss books and manuscripts altogether from the library, and only after some time are they found in the private rooms of Maurice, the young heir of the family which owns the library, who cannot be suspected of reading them.

At last the mystery is revealed. One afternoon, in Maurice's bachelor flat, a handsome young man suddenly appears to him and announces that he is his guardian angel, that he has lost his faith, and is about to organize a revolt among the angels. The guardian spirit has lately been reading all the literature of the rabbis, of the East, of Greece and Rome, and all philosophy, physics, geology, and biology. Abdiel, who now takes the name of Arcade on earth, has some trouble in convincing Maurice that an angel is capable of doing good or evil, and only succeeds by dint of reciting a string of authorities ranging from St. Jerome to Bede. He has more trouble in proving his identity to the lady who is breaking the Seventh Commandment when he appears; she cannot believe that he belongs to "the ninth choir of the third hierarchy" in the absence of wings,

or that he is pure spirit, since he has a visible body. After Maurice has bought him some second-hand clothes, Arcade sallies out into Paris, and proceeds to make the acquaintance of the other fallen angels in that city, of whom, it appears, there is a considerable number. His search introduces him to strange places and people: one of the angels is a leading capitalist who sees his way to a profit in the supply of high explosives for the revolt, and accordingly finances it; another is a gentle anarchist with a passion for constructing bombs; a third composes comic operas, which are unsuccessful as being too tuneful; a fourth takes him into the Russian and Polish colony, and shows him the gardener Nectaire, who was formerly the god Pan, from whom he hears the history of human progress at some length. Perhaps the most charming incident is the description of the flute-playing of Pan and its effect on Arcade and his surroundings:—

"On croyait entendre à la fois le rossignol et les Muses, toute la nature et tout l'homme. Et le vieillard exposait, ordonnait, développait ses pensées en un discours musical plein de grâce et d'audace. Il disait l'amour, la crainte, les vaines querelles, le rire vainqueur, les tranquilles clartés de l'intelligence, les flèches de l'esprit criblant de leurs pointes d'or les monstres de l'ignorance et de la Haine. Il disait aussi la Joie et la Douleur penchant sur la terre leurs têtes jumelles, et le Désir qui crée les mondes...."

"Une alouette, qui s'éveillait tout proche dans un champ sablonneux, attirée par ces sons nouveaux, s'éleva rapidement dans l'air, s'y soutint quelques instants, puis se lança d'un trait sur le verger du musicien.... Un petit lézard gris, s'étant coulé sur le seuil, y demeurait fasciné, et l'on eût pu voir, au grenier, la chauve-souris.... à demi réveillée de son sommeil hivernal, se balancer au rythme de la flûte inouïe."

The book ends with the final preparations for the revolt in heaven. Satan sees himself sure of victory, and in a dream envisages its consequences: how, enthroned as a new deity, he will become the centre of a new theology as despotic and unintelligent as that against which he had warred.

The admirers of Anatole France will find in this novel all his good qualities and some of his weaknesses. His wit, his humour, his amiable comprehension of human frailty, his bitter scorn of pretence, are all at their best; his characters, even the slightest of them, are alive and distinct; the follies of the day are caught on the wing, and transfigured with delicate irony; but his long relations are as wearisome in this work as in 'L'Ile des Pingouins.' The English reader need only compare his account of the finding of the body of Julia with that of Oscar Wilde in 'The Truth of Masks' to realize the difference between the two masters of style.

It would seem that there is a natural length of story for Anatole France, and that, when he is tempted to go beyond it, his inspiration fails, and he produces something which may or may not be good, but is no longer distinctive, marked with the touch which has made his fame.

A GROUP OF SEVEN.

FICTION, as Mr. Gosse truly says, is no longer the Cinderella of literature, nor perhaps would George Eliot declare nowadays that she wrote "not *mere* novels, but books." The truth is that the novel has leapt so violently into popularity as to have shouldered every other form of literary activity except the memoir into the background. The result of this plethora in the fiction market has not been altogether beneficial. It has tended to stimulate invention and ingenuity at the expense of style and imagination. The average fiction of to-day has come to obey, implicitly and mechanically, certain specific canons of authorship, so broad and well defined that there is little opportunity for it to run off the rails. But these canons of psychology, idea, treatment, and so on demand only a minimum of talent. The convention is at once a strict and a loose one. It must be obeyed, but the tax of obedience is absurdly easy of fulfilment. And the fact that public taste is indiscriminate and criticism lax and indulgent has greatly contributed to force the novel down upon a bed too comfortable for vitality.

These remarks are not so irrelevant to the seven novels under consideration as they sound. With one or two exceptions, themselves under the partial tyranny of the convention, they illustrate the limitations we have indicated. Danchenko's book, 'Princes of the Stock Exchange,' indifferently translated by Dr. Rappoport, is a fantastic example of the incongruity of the "happy ending." It is a satire on the newly fledged Russian plutocracy, illustrating the commercialization of human values. Wives are bought as well as shares, and it is a sordid account of intrigue, treachery, cynicism, and licence. It is interesting, but utterly formless and chaotic. Danchenko contrives to suggest that the heroine, who sells herself in matrimony to the financier Velinski to save her father, and in a reaction against the infidelity of her lover, has, owing to Velinski's indulgence, no quite impossible future before her. It is a grotesque desertion to the flag of optimism.

'Oh, Mr. Bidgood!' does not even struggle with the formal requirements of an entertainment. Mr. Bidgood is the chief

The Princes of the Stock Exchange. By Nemirovich-Danchenko. Translated from the Russian by Dr. A. S. Rappoport. (Holden & Hardingham, 6s.)

Oh, Mr. Bidgood! By Peter Blundell. (John Lane, 6s.)

And Afterwards the Judgment. By Richard Catt. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

The Orley Tradition. By Ralph Straus. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

The King of Alsander. By James Elroy Flecker. (Goschen, 6s.)

Cuddy Yarborough's Daughter. By Una L. Silberrad. (Constable & Co., 6s.)

The Folk of Furry Farm. By K. F. Purdon. (Nisbet & Co., 6s.)

engineer of the Susan Dale, a ship which is a kind of stage for the antics of a number of *farceurs*—the captain, a couple of adventurers, the owner, two philandering girls, and others. The book adopts throughout a tone of deliberate facetiousness, and is like a watered solution of Mr. W. W. Jacobs without his spontaneity and rough characterization.

Mr. Catt's book is more complicated and even more unlike reality. 'And Afterwards the Judgment' is the story of an infertile marriage. The husband resents his wife's inability to present him with a son, and she suggests to him the precedent of Abraham and Hagar. A sentimental widow supplies the necessary son, falls in love with a hotel-keeper, but conceives herself unworthy of him. Meanwhile the wife repents of the bargain, and at the same time falls in love with an Italian artist. So what could the superfluous husband do but commit suicide, and pave the way for the two idyllic marriages which take place in the appropriate last chapter? The artificial conclusion is indeed well adapted to the aimless and unnatural elaboration of events, at odds with both probability and sanity of attitude.

'The Orley Tradition,' though more rational and transparent, is hardly superior to 'And Afterwards the Judgment.' It concerns the fortunes of a "sprig of the nobility," who, after what the author conceives to be a rather disreputable adherence to art and politics, returns to the loftier traditions of golf, hunting, and management of his estates. To make his picture the more convincing, Mr. Straus couples with the former pursuit an adventuress, and with the latter a girl in close association with "the stately homes of England," whom the hero, finding her to be of the same calibre as himself, eventually marries. The partisanship of the book should please the inhabitants of the stately homes.

With 'The Orley Tradition' behind us, we pass into the company of the exceptions. The worst of it is that they are exceptional only in patches; they are parti-coloured, tarred (one might say) by originality, and feathered by convention. 'The King of Alsander,' for instance, displays a certain freshness and individuality of treatment; but its foundations, like multitudes of other books owning the same allegiance, rest firmly based upon 'The Prisoner of Zenda.' The grocer-boy who leaves his counter for the strange and degenerate country of Alsander becomes a member of a patriot conspiracy, deposes the mad young king, and, after battling with a counter-conspiracy of the reactionaries, marries the glorious Princess Ianthe and lives happily ever afterwards: it is easy to recognize the paternity of such a narrative. Mr. Flecker is, we think, for all the vigour of his presentment, happiest in his digressions. Here his irony, humour, and lightness of touch have an admirable playing-field. It is not a profound or a

searching humour, but it is vivacious and well salted:—

"And criminals? O we flog them still, but only the poor, violent, rough fellow who does a bit of straightforward business. It is that fat financier whose juicy back I want to see streaked with red like a rasher of bacon; it is that ape-like vestryman, whose yells would be music to my ears; it is, above all, the proprietor of pills that I would strap down to his alliterative and appropriate post, the pillory."

'Cuddy Yarborough's Daughter' is a sincere study of middle-class country life, well flavoured with gentle observation and unobtrusive satire. Its cardinal virtue is unpretentiousness. The plot is of the simplest—it is centred upon Countershell, the home of the Yarboroughs, and as soon as the daughter gets back there with an appropriate husband, after dolorous exile in other less agreeable places, the book sinks naturally to its close. Its atmosphere is one of kindness—a subdued fastidiousness of values—which throws up the character of Maud, the "daughter's" self-centred, casually egotistical cousin, in strong and salient relief. Otherwise the psychology preserves a tranquil mean, harvesting a store of minor treasures. Miss Silberrad, indeed, has sufficient parts to have made her story more ambitious and less, if we may use the word, crepuscular. A bolder and more confident workmanship would have easily snapped those fetters of convention which, however lightly, she still wears. As it is, the book is a sort of grey monotone, charming in its way, but a little insignificant.

To 'The Folk of Furry Farm' Canon Hannay writes an introduction, in which he assures us that he knows exactly what position Miss Purdon holds in the history of the Irish literary revival. But, as a matter of fact, he does not. He fancies that no writer before Miss Purdon has revealed the life of the great central plain of Ireland, and he will have it that her treatment is as unique as her setting. What, then, of Mr. Padraic Colum, who literally discovered the peoples of Leinster? and what of Miss Jane Barlow, whose prose studies bear a far closer affinity to Miss Purdon's than does the work of Mr. Standish O'Grady, "the father of the whole movement" of prose fiction, as Canon Hannay calls him? At any rate, whatever its origins, Miss Purdon's book is delightful. It is not so much a novel as a loose collection of semi-detached short stories, over which old Michael Heffernan, in quest of a bride, presides like a chorine emblem. In its soft outlines and gentleness of attitude the book has sympathies with that of Miss Silberrad. Its triumph lies, however, not in characterization, but dialogue. The characters, pleasant as they are, are not well differentiated, and lack force and initiative. What matters is not what they are, but what they say. The whole is written from the peasant outlook, and in the peasant speech. What an exquisite granary of phrases it is! phrases

quickened by an alert and fecund imagination, less sumptuous than Synge's, but closer to the vital domesticities of Ireland. Canon Hannay quotes, as a description of a solitary dwelling, "There wasn't a neighbour within the bawl of an ass of it." There are hundreds like it. Certainly, if Miss Purdon's figures do not stand out brilliantly and vigorously from her pages, their delicately humorous language almost compensates for it.

SOCIAL STUDIES.

A Crooked Mile. By Oliver Onions. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

NOWADAYS, when so many persons are convinced that it is their mission in life to accelerate social reform, it is easy to stigmatize enthusiasm as mere love of notoriety. Sympathy with others in failing health—mental or physical—is not easy to the robust unless they are aided by some similar experience. From the tone of Mr. Onions's book, we should not imagine that his mental equipoise had ever been in danger. Not lacking in caustic wit, he is lacking in that deeper discernment which can only be expected from those who perceive the sometimes narrow boundary which divides the enthusiast and the fanatic from the crank and the charlatan. We also miss that good sense which would have shrunk from crudely modelling the plot upon contemporary affairs.

As types the characters are admirable; it is only in connecting them with their too patent originals that we quarrel with their presentment. The moneyed proprietor of *The Novum*—well described here by a practical old lady as having "too much money and too little to do"—is engaged upon a biography of his wife, a pseudo-artistic woman, who, having once painted a picture which attracted some notice, has casts of her own person displayed about her house. The twin brother to the irresponsible editor who decamps as soon as the paper bears its Dead Sea fruit of useless outrage on life, is also, unhappily, possible to-day. More human, we are glad to say, are the other husband and wife who scorn the marriage rite in public, though they have submitted to it in private for the sake of their children. Besides these we have the physical-culture lady, who parades her knowledge of biology even more openly than she does her personal charms, and who in dishabille makes one of a company who blush at the purity of their own thoughts. There are several more; but we need not further particularize, having said enough, we hope, to send the reader to a most entertaining book. Mr. Onions is a real artist, and all his work is worth attention, though, perhaps, he has not yet "found himself," as he will do.

Children of the Dead End. By Patrick MacGill. (Herbert Jenkins, 6s.)

HAD the sub-title of this book, 'The Autobiography of a Navvy,' been more literally true, we believe this book would have secured greater attention, and been more worthy of it even than it is.

A reader of fiction, when in doubt as to whether part or a whole of it is real, decides the question by asking himself whether it is like what he knows of "real" life. Unfortunately, so few of the crowd of readers know anything about the life this book deals with that the majority of them will answer the question in the negative, not (as they should) in the affirmative.

It is a tale written to show that the beasts of the fields are better tended than some sons of men—especially if the latter are the offspring of Irish parents under the heel of the landlord and the priest. Some of the passages will be far too lurid for "respectable" people, and the whole is full of rugged strength. "Clever" people will find many "proofs" of exaggeration—not so those who are familiar with the seeming anomalies of poverty. For example, the author gives an instance of a navvy producing a watch from a pocket otherwise empty. Sympathetic study would soon reveal the fact that a disposition to cling to the comparatively useless is by no means confined to the "idle rich." In spite of industrial progresses by royalty, or perhaps on account of their stage-management, a real understanding between class and class seems as difficult as ever, and therefore we welcome such books as this.

So the World Wags. By Keble Howard. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

THIS is a set of dialogues grouped under headings: 'The World in Love,' 'The World in Trouble,' 'The World Day by Day,' and so on. The best of them are really good—not less so than Keble Howard's readers will have expected—so good, in fact, that one is impelled to wonder how it comes to pass that this amalgam of verve and wit, this accuracy of ear and quickness in catching the interplay between the habitual set of a person's mind and its superficial caprices, nevertheless seldom rises quite into the region where it must be taken seriously as art, and sometimes flickers down into mere triviality.

It is partly, we think, a result of the writer's too complete mastery of the trick of the thing, and somewhat too long practice in it, which seems to make him able to satisfy himself with an exercise of craft upon any and every suggestion, no matter how hackneyed; and partly a tendency to attend too exclusively to what one may call the more "niggling" humours of modern life. Again, we miss throughout the book any consciousness of a background. This need hardly be perceptible in each separate dialogue, yet must surely disengage itself from the work as a whole if it is to count as art.

Nevertheless, it is only fair to repeat that the best of these sketches are really good.

A Girl's Marriage. By Agnes Gordon Lennox. (John Lane, 6s.)

FAY BEAUMONT, whose parents died when she was very young, grew up in great happiness with three elder brothers to take care of her, and had reached the age of 20 before any one of these thought of marrying, and also without having herself acquired even the faintest idea of what marriage really is. When at length her eldest brother took to himself a wife, she was so greatly upset that she exacted from the next brother—her favourite among them—a promise that he would never commit the like absurdity, but live with her always. This promise he gave, but afterwards fell in love, and such was the honourable tenacity of the Beaumonts in the matter of their word that Fay realized there was only one way to deliver him from his scruples: she herself must marry. This—still in perfect ignorance—she accordingly did, setting about the preliminaries with an amazing promptitude and straightforwardness. It need hardly be said that her charms were such that she had suitors—rejected, but persevering—to choose from. It would be unfair to unravel the plot further; it turns naturally on the calamities which followed the young woman's rash step, and on the process by which in time she was converted into a most satisfactory wife. She is a very nice girl, and the book throughout is in excellent accord with her, in that it is sufficiently direct in regard to its main theme without being either coarse or sentimental. The characters have some measure of life about them, and here and there a scene proves telling; but the improbable is rather too frequent and predominant a factor in the sequence of incidents.

Man and Woman. By L. G. Moberly. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

AMONG the legislation which the eruption of militant Suffragism may call forth one beneficent law might enact that no persons should touch what has come to be known as the "woman question" unless they contribute to it something new and vital in matter or treatment. Such a law would have spared us from this rather naive elaboration of Tennyson's platitudes.

The woman's cause is man's, they rise or sink together.

The book's faults lie not in conception, but in workmanship. Had its highest been its general level, and had the crucial instants risen in expression to their intrinsic dignity, it would not have merited the hero's stock condemnation "sentimental." Of all the gifts and graces by which a human being can live in actual life, none is more elusive and incommunicable than "charm," and upon that the author relies for two of the leading characters. In fiction only a master craftsman can hope to convey it; so simple an artifice as calling a spinster of 50 "Aunt Delight," and commenting at length on her crown of white hair and

the beautiful soul in her blue eyes, proves quite ineffective.

Similarly, the profound theory of the salutary quality in Pain is "not a bow for every man to shoot in." Perhaps Miss Moberly's failure to redeem her attempt from an odd mixture of priggishness and banality is, perhaps, explained by her use of lines by a popular writer as headings of chapters.

The descriptions suggest that a greater success might have been achieved if the author had not adopted the difficult method of relation in the first person. There are, too, fleeting gleams of wit which should have, but somehow have not, redeemed the book.

Garden Oats. By Alice Herbert. (John Lane, 6s.)

THESE are the reminiscences of a young girl, beginning from her earliest days, concerned, as the title suggests, with the sowing of mildly "wild oats." They lead, however, to no serious results, and we leave her happily settled as a wife and mother. There is good material in the book, but the earlier chapters grow tedious, because they seem to be leading up to something and merely telling incidents by the way, whereas presently one discovers that there is nothing to lead up to, and the string of incidents is the story itself.

The heroine is the daughter of a widower who entrusts her to the care of two old sisters, staunch "Plymouth Brethren"; later he marries again, and the girl is sent for to live with him and her stepmother. The stepmother's character is the most attractive in the book, and rings truer than much of the story.

Phœbe Maroon. By Mary F. Raphael. (Heath, Cranton & Ouseley, 6s.)

PHŒBE MAROON is an artist's model who has sundry amatory adventures, not all of them regularized by wisdom or convention. Falling under the spell of an artist who is married, but separated from his wife owing to intemperance, Phœbe lives with him for some time; but when the wife dies she refuses to marry him, because she conceives that marriage is a barrier to his advance in art. Further developments we leave to the reader. The character of Phœbe Maroon is skilfully drawn, and not devoid of charm; in fact, the author is singularly happy in her feminine types, and should be able to write more arresting work.

IRELAND AND INDIA.

The Ulsterman: a Story of To-day. By F. Frankfort Moore. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

THERE is plenty of good stuff in this story, and the handling is, at any rate, not that of the amateur. The grimmer, more sordid side of the Ulster character, and the play of forces which in greater or lesser measure avail to break it down,

furnish the main subject. The dialogue is not a little heavy, and the characters, too, are heavily moulded. The writer has felt the need of introducing something in the nature of gracefulness and refinement, were it only to throw up the ruggedness and vulgarity of the chief personages; but he has succeeded only in contrasting these with stilted affectation and sentimentality. The incidents are, for the most part, crudely imagined, and follow on one another in a, so to speak, inconsequential order. The plot relates to the fortunes of a Mid-Antrim millowner and his family, where the usual differences between uneducated parents and somewhat more educated offspring are aggravated by the sons' relations with the daughters of Catholic neighbours. A little apart from this group is an Ulster barrister, an Oxford man, upon whom Mr. Moore has evidently lavished a good deal of thought, and not without purpose, for, on the whole, he forms the most finished study in the book.

There are occasional happy turns in the conversations and a good epigram or two in the narrative; and though some of the humour is far from enlivening, there are passages which, in this sense, make good enough reading.

Burnt Flax. By Mrs. H. H. Penrose. (Mills & Boon, 6s.)

THIS is a tale of the doings of the Irish Land League thirty years ago, and it says much for Mrs. Penrose's tact in handling her subject that, even at the present day, when Ireland's rights and wrongs are the subject of so much bitter controversy, no one could accuse her of partisan feeling. The political aspect is not allowed to predominate, but is simply a setting for a tragic love-story. Praise and blame are impartially distributed to landlords and tenants; obstinacy, ignorance, and folly are shown on both sides, leading to the disastrous results which are now a matter of history.

Two characters in the story stand out as possessed of more than usual merit: Anastasia, a gentle peasant girl, and Timasy, a "natural," but for all that a remarkably sensible person. The story closes with the death of these two, who fall victims of the vengeance of the Land League; and this part is not without real pathos, the more telling because it is restrained.

Baba and the Black Sheep. By E. W. Savi. (Hurst & Blackett, 6s.)

THE main interest of this story of life in India centres in a girl who lives alone on her estate on the borders of the Ganges. We gather that the estate is of considerable size, and that she lives as a queen among dependents who have known and loved her from babyhood. On the other side of the river lives the "black sheep," a man of good family, whose name is disgraced, and whose friends in the "Old Country" consider him dead. For two years these two remain unknown to each other, and then the man saves the girl's life, and she in another way saves his.

Born and educated entirely in India, the girl is looked down on by those who have been "home," and her serious view of her duties to her servants is ridiculed. The "black sheep" is still fairly black when we make his acquaintance, and very uninviting is the description of his home. He has a good friend, a rather colourless person, who always does the right thing; and the girl—on her side—has an appallingly vulgar stepmother, who arrives unexpectedly. The feature with which most trouble has been taken is the description of Indian life. The Ganges is shown to us in storm and in calm, but otherwise the scenery is not very clearly drawn. The writing and development of the tale are straightforward and clear.

The Happy Hunting Ground. By Alice Perrin. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

Mrs. PERRIN'S novel deals with Anglo-Indian life, a young wife's folly and temptation, and her eventual recovery of happiness. It is not a very strong story, but it is pleasantly told, and some of the characters are well drawn. Mrs. Perrin has done better work in the past, and will probably do better work in the future. In the interval this book is readable—the production of one who treats fiction seriously.

Father O'Flynn. By H. de Vere Stacpoole. (Hutchinson & Co., 1s. net.)

MR. STACPOOLE'S technical skill is great enough to impart even to a baldly sensational and wholly incredible narrative a certain attractiveness. His personages, indeed, are little more than puppets, yet they dance on their wires not only amusingly, but also with some semblance of spontaneity. It is, however, surely extravagant to include, in one comparatively brief story, an escape from a quicksand and another from a fall over a cliff, illicit distillation, a secret staircase, subterranean passages, a homicidal maniac, and a conflagration, in addition to a frustrated conspiracy against an unpopular landlord. The next time Mr. Stacpoole reviews his Irish material he will, it is to be feared, find his stock running a little short. The dedication of the volume—"To Sir E. Carson and Mr. Redmond"—was a happy thought.

UNLIKELY STORIES.

The Fortunate Youth. By William J. Locke. (John Lane, 6s.)

IF Mr. Locke's story possessed credible characters, and were not written throughout in a high-pitched falsetto, it might be a good novel, since its plot is both ingenious and, with one glaring exception, plausible. But not the best will in the world will enable any intelligent reader to believe either in the young hero, who rises from the position of a little male Cinderella in a slum to that of a young Tory statesman well in the running for ministerial honours, or in the princess whom he succeeds in marrying. Such a

story might carry conviction if its teller plainly believed in it, and if the style had that direct simplicity and that artful choice of apparently trivial detail which, in Defoe's hands, render so credible the history of the visit paid to Mrs. Bargrave by the apparition of Mrs. Veal. If, like Mr. Locke, Defoe had assumed a manner that invited us to observe his own cleverness, Mrs. Veal's ghost would have possessed no more authenticity than she of Cock Lane.

It Will be All Right. By Tom Gallon. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

THERE is a certain attraction about the underlying idea in the plot of this story; i.e., if you find yourself disappointed with life as you have hitherto known it, contrive so to disappear that every one will think you dead, and begin again with a fresh identity.

This, at all events, was the plan that Fergus Rowley tried, and though he missed his first personality for a time, he gradually developed a much finer one. The wealth he had abandoned lured him back to try to recover it, but, through the cowardice of one man and the fraud of another, he was forced to relinquish all hope of regaining it, and having once reconciled himself to the loss, he found his new self. His nephew Clement, who was thus suddenly raised from a City clerkship with 26s. a week to an income beyond his wildest dreams, had too vain a nature to stand the test of prosperity. He proceeded to spend wildly, and finally abandoned his young wife for a worldly woman who flattered his vanity. The book closes with a prospect of reconciliation.

Dora, the wife, is scarcely a convincing character, and had it not been for the efforts of Fergus, we doubt if she could have agreed with the author about the final rightness of all things. Mr. Gallon is, however, a sentimentalist, and hardly a severe student of human nature.

Curing Christopher. By Mrs. Horace Tremlett. (John Lane, 6s.)

THE theme of this story—the infatuation of a mild and stupid married man for a musical-comedy actress—does not appear to us to possess any great interest. The charm of the actress herself is not convincing, and we are thus unable to enter with sympathy into the clumsy subterfuges employed by the hero to deceive his family. The author's workmanship is good, and seems worthy of better material.

Jill-All-Alone. By Rita. (Stanley Paul & Co., 6s.)

THE young woman who gives her name to the book is a foundling brought up by an aged savant, who lives in a hermitage buried deep in a forest. At the beginning of the story he is found acting like a mediaeval magician, in virtue of powers which are supposed to have infused themselves into him in his long contact with

Nature. Nature is depicted according to that idea of Pan—half attractive, half malignant—which has cropped up here and there in recent novels. This aspect of the world rather fades away as the book proceeds. There are a wandering youth who stays for a time at the Hermitage, several gypsies, a villainous baronet, and an unaccountable stranger of great power and learning (nevertheless, he commits himself to the statement that there have been no female astronomers), who comes and goes mysteriously, and utters words of unfathomable profundity. The good ones live on coarse oatmeal, milk, and fruit, with lettuces and water brought in a cut-glass jug. The beginning and the end of the tale do not hang together, and, though we spent some time and pains over it, we do not know what it is all about.

James Whitaker's Dukedom. By Edgar Jepson. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

JAMES WHITAKER was trespassing in a wood when he was suddenly confronted by his double. The next instant the double was struck by lightning, and Whitaker promptly assumed the clothes and position of the dead man, and figures to the end of the story as the Duke of Lanchester, whose memory has been affected by a stroke of lightning. His adventures in his new capacity are but mildly comic. Mr. Edgar Jepson leads his impostor into so many stock situations, and leads him out again by such extraordinarily improbable devices, that we regard him in much the same light as the invulnerable, and therefore uninteresting, hero of a penny novelette. Everything turns out to the advantage of James Whitaker: his wife takes an overdose of veronal, the Duke's brother and only relative dies of apoplexy, and the supposititious peer falls in love with and marries the only witness of his usurpation.

His Great Adventure. By Robert Herrick. (Mills & Boon, 6s.)

FORTUNE, after frowning on Edgar Brainard from childhood to early manhood, suddenly relented, and cast at his feet a dying millionaire, who, with his latest breath, made him guardian of bonds valued at several million dollars. Pursued by the millionaire's enemies, the hero flees breathlessly from New York to San Francisco, and thence wanders through Arizona to Mexico, where he takes a steamer leaving Vera Cruz for Havre. Through a lucky breakdown of the steamer, which baffles his enemies, Brainard arrives safely in Paris and negotiates his bonds. With the money thus obtained he works a successful sulphur mine in Arizona, and, failing to find any heir to the dead man, uses the proceeds to found a "People's Theatre," feeling that it is his duty as trustee to allow the entire community to enjoy the proceeds of his trust. The fortunes of the theatre it would not be fair to divulge. We will only remark that the story depends more on its plot

than on its characters to hold the reader's attention, though people who are tired of the "temperamental" style of novel may welcome this tale of American hustle as a pleasant change.

Years of Discretion. By Frederic and Fanny Locke Hatton. (Maunsel & Co., 6s.)

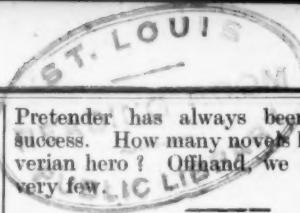
SKILL in reviewing nightmares or a gift for appraising the literary value of delirium is the kind of equipment required for satisfactory estimation of this novel. 'Years of Discretion' is a play turned into a novel, and probably owes much of its distracted impossibility to that fact. The entertaining underlying idea seems to us spoilt in the handling; for even the well-drawn picture of restless, wearying frivolity at the beginning is defaced here and there by a brutality so purposeless as to degenerate into vulgarity. Moreover, the end—the return to something like sense, the awakening to "years of discretion"—is marred by that sentimentality which is the stock-in-trade of inferior plays, and is even less convincing in print than on the stage.

Yet the literary style of the book is above the average of ordinary novels, and with all its impossible folly the delineation of character leaves an impression of living people. It is a curious performance, and not quite a waste of power, since it suggests that the authors could do far better if they dropped extravaganza. As it stands, it resembles the temporary insanity of persons fundamentally sane, but tricked into incredible capers by some irresistible Puck.

COUNTRY LIFE.

Love the Harper. By Eleanor G. Hayden. (Smith, Elder & Co., 6s.)

WE expect this story will be popular, and, in a quite worthy sense, it will be deservedly so. It conforms to the general imaginative convention of the last century, which allowed—nay, demanded—in the story-teller, a willingness to launch out into deep waters, and a refusal to do more than pretend to plumb their depths. The scene is laid in a village near the Downs—in some place where orange lilies are to be found flowering in the spring—and the landscape is prettily, if somewhat obviously, emphasized as a setting. The heroine is a young woman who has made an unfortunate secret marriage, which her villain of a husband before he departs for Australia informs her, quite falsely, is a bigamous one. For years, cast out by her father, she keeps her secret and endures shame, seeing her child by stealth and earning bitter bread. When her half-sister—who knows nothing of this history—becomes mistress of the family farm, better days begin, the hero arrives, and the story is set in motion. The injured wife goes to Queensland towards the end of the story to nurse her husband on his death-bed, and this gives an opportunity



for deftly worked-up pictures of the life and scenery there. An element of humour—some of it genuinely amusing—is provided by two village couples, of which the one tends towards the pathetic and the other towards the farcical, both having about them a touch of Dickensian loquacity. The faults of the book are a want of grasp of character, whence it comes about that the people in it seem to act at random, and without producing conviction; and a want of proportion in construction, whereby the more important scenes are slightly sketched in, and the less important somewhat over-elaborated. Its merits are pleasantness of style, kindness and wholesomeness of tone, and something, too, of a distinct atmosphere.

Potter and Clay. By Mrs. Stanley Wrench. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

If we were asked to choose between Mrs. Wrench's landscape and her portrait studies, we should without hesitation choose the former. A story of village life in the Midlands affords many opportunities for depicting the beauties of English scenery, and Mrs. Wrench avails herself of them with an artist's hand.

The lives of her villagers, however, in no way correspond to these innocent and peaceful scenes. Passion, treachery, and religious bigotry are the sources of the trouble with which the story abounds. Marah, whose name foreshadows her fate, escapes at 17 from a brutal father by marrying John Blunt, a man much her senior in age, and her superior in education. With him she lives happily for some years, until his failing sight obliges him to enlist the services of a secretary, Paul Haddon, who arouses the unawakened passion of Marah's nature. Blunt, on becoming aware of this, goes off to Africa, taking the secretary with him. The young man dies, and Blunt announces the death as his own, and returns to the village under the name of Paul Haddon, wearing a black silk mask on the pretence that half his face has been shot away by savages. In an intricate series of love-affairs this mask plays a tragic part, and is much dwelt on as a symbol of the concealments of men and women.

A Free Hand. By Helen C. Roberts. (Duckworth & Co., 6s.)

The tale is, in this case, a sheer contradiction of the title, which would have been more aptly 'A Tied Hand.' The picture of the chalk cliffs on the cover also gives an idea of freedom painfully at variance with the "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" life of the hero.

Appalled by the thought of being condemned to follow his father in the keeping of a stationer's shop, the boy determines to tell his parents of his desire for Colonial life. His mother, however, fore-stalls his outburst by informing him she has saved money to put him into a profession. Irresolute, and disliking to give pain to his parents, he drifts into dentistry.

The one resolute action of his life is his marriage; but his wife, an actress, being temperamentally unfitted to him, they drift apart, and finally he divorces her. The story has little to relieve it, but the description of Brighton and Lewes and the country round will appeal to those familiar with the South Coast and the Sussex Downs.

The Master of Merrifit. By Eden Phillpotts. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

DARTMOOR—and especially the district round Postbridge—is once more the scene of Mr. Phillpotts's story; the time is the age of highwaymen, and the capture of two particularly terrible specimens, twin brothers, is the main episode of the book. There are also two rustic love-stories, and enough is supplied in the way of incident and local colour to sustain the reader's interest and revive his knowledge of the moor.

HISTORICAL FICTION.

The Way of Little Gidding. By E. K. Seth-Smith. (H. R. Allenson, 3s. 6d.)

AT first sight a critic might demur to any romance about Little Gidding, since a parade of historical knowledge and an affectation of seventeenth-century diction might easily spoil so delicate a fragrance as that which lingers round the Ferrars. But the author has caught something of the remote peace and serene confidence which that withdrawn community possessed; her effortless writing and unstrained feeling just convey the quiet strength of the family who, whatever changes befall, must retain an abiding-place in this country's chronicles. For quite different reasons, it is as well that people to-day should be reminded of the faithfulness with which men and women lived, prayed, and died for the Church; and as well that they should realize—as they may all the more easily from the book's restraint—what civil war actually means.

The Great Attempt. By Frederick Arthur. (John Murray, 6s.)

THE author of this book writes a short, but earnest Preface in which he sketches the political situation which led up to the rebellion of 1745, and hints mysteriously that the events of that period may not be without their lesson for our own day. He then goes on to tell a quite good story of "the cloak and rapier" order, with any quantity of stirring incident, some traditional love-making, and the usual accompaniment of faithful servants, brutal Hanoverians, and supernaturally cunning Catholic priests. The historical novel of this kind was lamed for life by Thackeray's 'Esmond'; but it has contrived to hobble along somewhere near the main movement of fiction up to the present, and will probably go on doing so for some time. Mr. Arthur makes a mistake in speaking of the Jacobite cause as unpopular. From the days of 'Waverley' the Young

Pretender has always been a fictional success. How many novels have a Hanoverian hero? Offhand we can think of very few.

Unto Caesar. By Baroness Orczy. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

THIS is the story of the conduct of a man called Taurus Antinor Anglicanus, prefect of Rome, and also a Christian, at a time when a conspiracy threatened the life of Caligula, and when, by accepting the offer of the hand of the beautiful Augusta, Dea Flavia, he might have made himself Caesar. There is no need to take it seriously from the point of view of history. The writer depicts with an unsparing fullness many gorgeous scenes, and her *dramatis personæ* deliver themselves of many lofty speeches. Here and there are whiffs of atmosphere, a real vision of a city, the sense of a crowd, but individual characterization, as well as incident, is blurred and lost in the misty outpourings of sentimentality.

The Sea Captain. By H. C. Bailey. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

MR. BAILEY sets his story of love, seafaring, and the rise to fortune of his hero in the days of Elizabeth, and writes it with plenty of vigour and imagination. His Diccon Rymingtonwe appears first as a sort of village idiot and rather disreputable character, and goes through a wonderful metamorphosis. The public that cares for historical fiction will read the book with pleasure.

The Gates of Doom. By Rafael Sabatini. (Stanley Paul & Co., 6s.)

READERS who have followed the daring exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel, Beau Brocade, and other heroes of romance should find something to suit their tastes in Mr. Sabatini's latest contribution to historical fiction. He writes in a brisk and vivacious manner. He is a cunning artificer of dramatic situations, and his characters in this instance, although sketched on somewhat conventional lines, are distinctly alive.

The scene of the plot is Georgian England, the principal actor in the drama being a soldier of fortune, who is employed on a secret mission as a Jacobite agent. With due regard to the encounters and intrigues of the period, we must consider some of his adventures as truly amazing.

CRIME AND ADVENTURE.

The Wanderer's Necklace. By H. Rider Haggard. (Cassell, 6s.)

IN this book Sir H. Rider Haggard has returned to the manner of his first romances. The chief character is a new rendering of Allan Quatermain, and once again the re-incarnation *motif* appears. The wanderer is a Scandinavian who comes to the Court of Irene and Constantine VII. at Byzantium, and gives numerous exhibitions of that invincible behaviour which endears heroes to many youthful

readers. Full-length portraits are given of the ambitious Empress and her ineffective son. The usual semi-occult strain is introduced by such devices as dreams, and a mysterious necklace. The author has deliberately allowed an element of incoherence to enter the story. The wanderer tells only parts of his tale through the mediumship of a subsequent incarnation. This too is reminiscent of some of the early romances. The numerous admirers of 'She' will find much to their taste in 'The Wanderer's Necklace.'

The End of her Honeymoon. By Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. (Methuen & Co., 6s.) This is a pleasantly exciting story of the possibilities and impossibilities of a man's disappearance in Paris. On the whole, the plot is neatly constructed, though it is hard to believe that the stranded girl would have blundered so completely over proving her story. For instance, we have to wait till the eighth chapter before she produces the address of her old family lawyer, and another five before we learn that she be-thought herself of the Rouen hotel where she had stayed with the lost husband; while the crucial fact that the carriage in which they both drove away from the Gare Saint Lazare was stopped by the police and that their identity was noted—the fact which would have prevented the mystery—is not referred to again. Perhaps that is well, for otherwise an eminently readable, even absorbing, and easily written romance would have been frustrated. It is a novel of plot, scarcely at all of character. Only absorption in the mystery could account for the curiously abortive treatment of Salgas, and the naive confidence shown in the chattering Major Dallas of Scotland Yard by the Prefect of the French police. But all who value a couple of hours' recreation should be grateful to Mrs. Belloc Lowndes.

Two Women. By Max Pemberton. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

THIS story tells of the escape from a German fortress of one of the heroes, who has been imprisoned on a charge of espionage; of the relations of the other, a dissolute young peer, with a beautiful adventuress; and of the noble (though happily temporary) self-sacrifice of the second heroine. The various elements in the tale are not combined with any coherence, and in the two chapters at the end which describe separately the fates of the women we have a clumsy method of winding up the double theme. The book will probably please many readers by virtue of its spice of adventure—of the certainty from the first that every character will meet in the end with its due.

The Crimson Honeymoon. By Headon Hill. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

A DEBONAIR villain; a rising young barrister; an amiable and titled, if foolish hero; also corpses, racing cheats, blood dripping from the ceiling on to the dinner-table, and finally a death-trap in a cellar, to be worked when, as the villain's chauffeur

remarks, "the tide will commence to ebb two hours after midnight, madame"—such are some of the paraphernalia of this unqualified melodrama.

The Hidden Mask. By C. Guise Mitford. (Stanley Paul & Co., 6s.)

THOSE who have no taste for murder mysteries and thrilling situations should not take up this novel, for if they do so, they will probably find themselves compelled against their inclination to read it to the end. Highly fantastic and gruesome, it does not exhibit any marked degree of originality in its conception, nor do the characters strike us as possessing much individuality. But the author succeeds in stimulating our sense of expectation, and has woven an intricate plot.

Blind Man's Buff. By Jacques Futrelle. (Hodder & Stoughton, 2s. net.)

THIS story of an American ignoramus of French searching for a defaulting bank manager in Paris is comparatively short—under 200 pages—and has not the ingenious elaboration of many detective tales of to-day. The bank manager possesses a daughter, who, as might be expected, provides the love-interest. Jacques Futrelle, however, wrote very much better than the average purveyor of mystery. This story of his has humour and vividness, though some of the Americanisms will be beyond the average reader; for example, betting "ten dollars to a hole in a pretzel." The book shows also vividness of an easier sort to understand in such phrases as "Here and there across the Seine some prodigal giant has flung a handful of glittering stars in parallel arches, and these are bridges." The author was an artist in his way, and his books are always pleasant reading.

TALES OF THE WILD.

The Way of the Strong. By Ridgwell Cullum. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

THIS book opens amid one of those wild and desolate scenes which Mr. Cullum well knows how to impress on the reader's imagination: it is the desert heart of the Yukon in winter, "the great white land, broken and torn" and silent. A woman and the man she loves are facing the perils of the winter trail, trying to reach civilization in time for her child to be born without shame. Later we have equally striking descriptions of wide cornfields in the heart of Canada, and it is here the millionaire's luxurious home is set.

The "strong man" is primæval and rough in character, unscrupulous and free in his vengeance as in his generosity. At first the greed of gain entirely possesses him; later in life his love for a woman absorbs him as completely. The plot, though in many respects skilfully constructed, is yet at its foundation weak. The woman travelling from the Yukon is separated from her lover, reaches her destination alone, and dies soon after

the child's birth. The story then turns on the promise of her young sister, a girl of 17, to bring this boy up as her own, and to let it be supposed that he was born in wedlock, and that she is a widow. That a girl so young, loving her unfortunate sister, and in the presence of death, should be willing to promise this, is conceivable; what seems to us curious is that after eighteen years, when she is about to be married, she should tell the boy of his unhappy birth, but yet allow him still to believe that she is his mother. She thus sacrifices herself to spare her sister's memory, and breaks her promise in its essential part. Upon this much that follows depends, and it could only have been made convincing if pity and love for the memory of the dead mother had been shown to have some remaining power. But this is not the case.

There are many complications in which Socialism and Labour unrest play some part; there are also many good situations cleverly handled, and several interesting characters besides those mentioned; but on the whole we think the book would have been better had it been shorter. The dialogue is in the strong Canadian idiom, roughly picturesque, which the author usually employs.

The Reconnaissance. By Gordon Gardiner. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

IN this volume is presented the striking paradox of a man who gains the Victoria Cross through being a coward. As he subsequently confesses, it was his overmastering fear of being left by himself in the desolate veld, surrounded by hostile and savage natives, that made it possible for him to carry a wounded comrade for twelve days over dangerous, difficult country where the scarcity of food was only equalled by the want of water. The contrast between Capt. Robertson, the rough frontier policeman, and Bishop Raymond, the aristocratic High Church African prelate, is one of the best things in the book.

There are many good points about Leslie, the V.C., but the presentment of Mabel, the "principal lady," though it contains some excellent material, occasionally suffers from the weight of "purple patches" and emotional treatment. We like Lady Grace Whipham, a fussy, but kindly old body with a passion for effecting introductions.

The Chief of the Ranges. By H. A. Cody. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

THE story is somewhat fragmentary and lacking in dramatic interest, yet the author displays an intimate acquaintance with Indian life and character. The book deals with the adventures of Ouindia, daughter of an Indian chief; Natsate, her lover; and Roger Dean, an old trader of the plains. Feuds between the Chileot and Ayana Indians are well portrayed, and in his description of life in the Yukon and the Canadian North-West the author exhibits a practical acquaintance with his subject.

The City of Hope. By C. Fox Smith. (Sidgwick & Jackson, 6s.)

HOPE CITY is one of those curious products of Western Canada that, when they are once started, spring into full life and activity almost in a single night. When we first see it in this story, however, it is still only in the "plot" stage, despite the more or less fraudulent attempts of real-estate agents to foist land on to the public at artificially inflated values. An English solicitor sends out a son of roving disposition while the "slump," accentuated by bad harvests, is at its worst, and the tale turns on the hardships endured by the youth and on his marriage with the charming daughter of a drunken scamp. With considerable force the author shows that "variety and adventure... incident and splendid freedom" are not the only aspects of life in West Canadian "back blocks" to be thought of:—

"People would do well to appreciate the facts before they pitchfork their difficult and wilful boys, those whom they have themselves shirked the unpleasantness of schooling, into the midst of the hardest and bitterest school on earth. It is a mistake too often and too fatally made to think that the wilful and wayward will be best mastered by harshness."

The book carries one on to the end without flagging. Perhaps the best piece of characterization is that of the heroine's degenerate father, who is well drawn.

The Pathway. By Gertrude Page. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

GIVEN a pair of lovers living near one another in a country where convention is practically non-existent, their tale of true love threatens to run much too smoothly, so that one can hardly blame the author for the ruthless way in which she separates them. The heroine, through a chain of events which could have been easily explained, is discovered by her lover at lunch in the house of a rival, and this is sufficient excuse for the hero to betake himself to India without deigning to leave an address or waiting to hear how she came to accept the invitation. In his absence the heroine—after some life-saving on both sides—becomes engaged to a man of importance; but even this rash step did not alarm us. With a confidence that was fully justified, we relied on the author to bring back the impetuous Toby in the nick of time to stop their marriage.

Rhodesia is the country chosen as the field of the drama, and the writer pays a well-deserved tribute to the women engaged in the task of building up a still young country, to their courageous struggle with domestic difficulties, and with the loneliness which many of them feel acutely.

The Rocks of Valpré. By Ethel M. Dell. (Fisher Unwin, 6s.)

THE easy simplicity with which this story is told is its chief merit; its faults are undue length and too numerous love-scenes. The heroine is a childish girl

who at seventeen meets a young French soldier on the sands of Valpré. Her character is clearly drawn: winsome, sparkling, but unstable; and when she grows up and is married to a rather sternly truthful husband she goes wrong through lack of truthfulness. The Frenchman becomes her husband's friend and secretary, and the whole story turns on their former acquaintance and adventure on the rocks. Here is the weakness of the plot: too much mystery made of this adventure, and no adequate reason shown why the husband should not have heard of it.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS.

Time and Thomas Waring: the Study of a Man. By Morley Roberts. (Eveleigh Nash, 6s.)

IT is with sincere pleasure that we welcome the appearance of a work which brings Mr. Morley Roberts within the small circle of fiction-writers who may be looked to for a serious influence on the thought of our times. The pleasure is all the greater because it is unexpected. Nothing in the author's later work had prepared us for the kind of outlook on life here revealed.

The writing of this book must have been as bold an adventure on the part of Mr. Roberts as it is a successful one; it is inconceivable that it can appeal with any great force to the more youthful of his accustomed audience. The reader must have had some experience of life, some schooling in pain, to appreciate the first-hand quality of the observation it reveals, the pressure of the problems set out in it for solution. In stating them the author has not overstrained his privilege as a novelist to emphasize his situations.

Thomas Waring is an efficient and successful worker. As a father he has allowed a wall to grow between him and his children; as a man he has insisted on the value of conventional religion and morals for other people, while taking his own way without even formulating an excuse for himself. His wife is a brilliant study of the way in which a certain type of Englishwoman stays outside her husband's real life, yet persists in trying to dominate it; while his daughter Joyce and Jennie Vale are perfectly distinct and well-drawn types of fine modern womanhood. The shock which brings Waring's life to a sudden stop, and forces him to reconsider his whole relationship to his surroundings in the light of fast-approaching death—a very severe operation—leads him to a readjustment of values; he perceives that the only result of one's life to be esteemed is not what one does, but how others have been affected by it, and he sets out to liquidate his responsibilities to his world by kindness and tolerance, without reference to any religious sanction. It is a simple solution, and not a new one, but it is worked out with great ability.

A finely conceived piece of imaginative psychology is the account of the return of consciousness to Thomas Waring after his operation. Few or none, perhaps, can pronounce on its objective truth, but any one who has ever passed through a midnight horror, and felt himself suspended in a blank nothingness, with ages between the human companionship that lay behind him, and more ages to come before the dawn, will feel that so it must have been. Equally well observed, too, is that metallic taste which often accompanies weakness and pain, and that sudden loud beating of the heart which catches the attention at silent moments. Yet, however harrowing the story, there is nothing over-pressed in it, nothing needless or inartistic.

The mere writing of the book is masterly. Its first sentences—hard, clear, almost abrupt, and hurried—put us at once in harmony with the patient as he comes into the operating-room which is to be the theatre of the struggle for his life. As the tension relaxes, the style becomes easier; and though Mr. Roberts never becomes lyrical, he never fails to rise to the demands of his situation, even at the last, when Waring is bidding farewell to the life he has to leave.

The Way Home. By Basil King. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

'THE WAY HOME' contains honest work well done, and the author has a true craftsman's care for his creation. Readers who regret the facility of its popular view of religion may still admit that it rises above the rather dismal level of present-day novels. If it does not carry entire conviction, it awakens interest in the characters, who are people, not mere dummies, and it is well written. Perhaps the early chapters, perhaps even the whole book, would not have been written had Romain Rolland never given the world 'Jean-Christophe'; nevertheless, it is superior to some echoes of that great work. The slow unfolding—possibly a trifle too slow—of Charlie Grace's character is more successful than that of either of the women whose fortunes are linked with his. About them both is an uncertainty of intention, which in one case amounts almost to a volte-face. A pleasant humour belongs to the sacristan, who, combining the licence which seems the property of his vocation with simple faith, relieves the sombre painful atmosphere of the American environment—where money rules, where Christianity suffers most at the hands of its professors, and where the general maxim is presented as "Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." In this depressing scene the two priests, and particularly, through some subtle failure in conception, Mr. Legrand, hardly fill the parts assigned them; they contrive, however, to avoid that deplorable descent into caricature which often offends taste and outrages facts on the English stage and in English fiction.

Fine Clay. By Isabel C. Clarke. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

THE marriage, unwittingly, of a young and romantic girl—a Roman Catholic—to a *divorcé*, and her break with him when she discovers his duplicity, provide Miss Isabel Clarke with an interesting theme for her latest novel. Still further to complicate matters, the husband, a younger son, unexpectedly becomes heir to a title and estates, but owing to a will, the terms of which exclude Catholics, his son is debarred from following him. He and his young wife, however, both die early, and a stern old grandfather tries hard to bring up the boy—who is, of course, in the eyes of the law, legitimate—as a Protestant, but without success. Miss Clarke has treated her subject ably, and she has a quiet, easy style which makes the reading of her book a pleasure, though it is possible that her insistence on the superiority of the Roman Catholic faith is overdone.

The Tresleys. By Henry Cockburn. (Melrose, 6s.)

THE point of ethics raised in this novel is, Should a man who has previous, but not confidential information about an impending bank smash attempt to sell to the unsuspecting public shares with an unlimited liability attached to them? Col. Tresley says No, and as a consequence is utterly ruined. These shares were part of a large legacy that he had unexpectedly come into: "Some malicious fairy might have made it her gift, with trouble of mind and material loss for its only results."

How his chivalrous conduct is regarded by the various members of his family, and their reception of a proposal to refund him the generous portions that he had given them outright immediately on coming into his fortune, form the main subject-matter of the subsequent pages.

Mr. Cockburn's first essay in fiction promises well. There is a pleasing simplicity and directness in his style; he is a keen observer of human nature, and, if some of his characterization is a little too much "on the surface," his meaning is plain.

The Price of Conquest. By Ellen Ada Smith. (John Long, 6s.)

THE portrayal of genius in fiction is proverbially difficult, and we rather feared for Miss Smith when we found that she had made both her hero and heroine brilliant violinists. Fortunately, our fears are in no way shared by the author herself, and though she is no stylist, and is at times a little inclined to flamboyancy—sentiment and melodrama are by no means without a place in the book—she carries us along with so much energy and cheery optimism that we almost forget her imperfections. She has the knack of telling a story and compelling the reader's sympathy for her characters. Towards the end of the book, the emotions of a great musician, whose wife—a former pupil—is, as he thinks, outstripping him in skill and popularity, are analyzed with no little subtlety.

On the Staircase. By Frank Swinnerton. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

WE are grateful to Mr. Swinnerton for his selection of the raw material of 'On the Staircase.' This novel presents a few members of a class of English society which novelists seldom depict. The intelligent clerk exists in large numbers; he has solid intellectual interests, he reads such authors as Mr. A. C. Bradley, and prefers good lasting works to the flashy and ephemeral and much-advertised. But because he is unostentatious and writes little he is collectively unnoticed. The affairs of two men of this class, and of their sisters, occupy a large part of the novel. The remainder is concerned with the life, marriage, and death of Adrian Velancourt, who stands on the margin of this class. He is cast from a different mould, or perhaps from a mould that was a little twisted, and his hyperesthesia leads to pain and death. With a consideration of the ethics of his suicide the book comes to an end.

The characters stand out from the first with admirable distinctness, although the author is inclined to play with the theme of repulsion as a prelude to attraction perhaps a little to excess. It is not altogether easy to pin one's faith to a lady who says to her lover, "Sometimes I think you so objectionable that I wonder to find myself talking to you," and shortly afterwards asks him to repeat his proposal to her. But these things may really happen.

The Pessimist: a Confession. By A. Newman. (Nutt, 6s.)

A PREFACE of aphorisms printed in italics is an unfortunate beginning for a novel, hardly improved by the inclusion of such a one as "Every artist is a slave; but there is an exquisite sweetness in his servitude." We must frankly admit that we are not acquainted with men of science, bishops, or even—to use the author's phrase—"a perfect gentleman," who endeavour, like the characters in this book, to sparkle into epigram every time they open their mouths, and fail on every occasion. As literature it is a failure, as philosophy shallow, as religion *nil*; yet it purports to deal with all three.

It is not even thought out on its own chosen lines; for the author has invented an epoch-making discovery which might destroy the whole world by breaking a jar of germs, and a little invention on his part might have saved his logic, if not the probability of things, by the additional discovery of some sterilizing power.

The Marriage Contract. By Joseph Keating. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

THE most valuable idea in this interesting story seems to us to be the author's contention that sin is a disease of the soul, and has the same pathological consequences as disease of the body—i.e., the sufferer must either recover or death ensues. His argument is, therefore, that the sinner, purified by the purgative of

suffering and repentance, is entitled to be considered in as perfect health spiritually as the sick man, after complete convalescence, has bodily.

Delia, a wife false to her marriage vows, gets for the first time in her shallow life a glimpse of something greater than she has yet known when her husband refuses to take the usual legal compensation for his wrongs, but reinstalls her as mistress of his home. Antony's conception of his "marriage contract" did not include any provision for release in the event of one of the parties breaking faith; wherein he differed from Society in general, and his Cousin Jane in particular, whose anxiety to see the faithless Delia drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs is true to life. The book concludes with Antony's successful attempt to "hate the sin, but love the sinner."

Mr. Keating seems to us, however, to be on debatable ground when he makes jealousy the root of Delia's renewed love for her husband, and insists that it is the essential mire from which the lily of passion springs. Surely jealousy was merely a bitter flavour added to her love, which was really born of the vision of a nobility she had not hitherto suspected. As a whole, the book presents a large-hearted view of humanity which should make a wide appeal.

Leviathan. By Jeannette Marks. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

A YOUNG professor in an American University who is about to be married has contracted the opium habit. Conscious of his weakness, the heroine of the story decides to marry him, with the object of devoting her life to his reclamation. His reformation is at last attained, presumably through the medium of a number of long and wearisome declamations, more appropriate in a pamphlet than in a novel. The author indulges in some violent diatribes in conjunction with statements that are grossly exaggerated; for instance, she writes:—

"Opium is the backbone of the Anglo-Indian Government. In England itself there is scarcely a family of any position that has not its opium addicts. And because England cannot do without it, the Anglo-Indian Government has put it on record in decisions that opium is a harmless stimulant, good for all ages, including babies, and that no home is really home without it."

This is a fair sample of the author's propaganda.

We deprecate such wild statements, and we can find nothing to commend in the characteristics or style of the volume.

The Sentence Absolute. By Margaret Macaulay. (Nisbet & Co., 6s.)

THE ethical interest in this story lies in the expiation of a wrong committed in a moment of great temptation. The hero, a young consulting engineer, overcome by the pressure of Cambridge debts and the importunities of moneylenders, accepts the tender of a firm which carries with it a

heavy commission for himself. His sin finds him out, and the heroine is faced with a problem which puts her love for him to a severe test. With the somewhat harsh ideals of extreme youth, she finds it equally difficult to condone his fault, and to realize the value of his subsequent remorse and penance. The writer, who possesses a simple, straightforward style, has created two attractive young people; if the mind of the heroine is somewhat slow and unreceptive, it is doubtless due to her conventional, though pleasant, upbringing and surroundings.

SOCIAL COMEDY.

The Cuckoo Lamb. By Horace W. C. Newte. (Chatto & Windus, 6s.)

SATIRE recoils on the satirist when it condemns him to clog his narrative with the sayings and unimportant doings of a set of pseudo-artistic people whose silliness lacks the charm of the comic. That is the verdict which we feel bound to pass on a considerable portion of this sometimes admirable story. Mr. Newte has for his heroine a country girl with an aptitude for writing fiction, who, after experience as a domestic servant, blossoms under a pen-name into a novelist, and is tempted to hide her plebeian past.

The first half of the book is distinguished by a happy union of fancy and realism. The indomitably imaginative girl with her two sweethearts and disapproving relatives, in a rural setting at once pretty and horrid, is excellently visualized. The way in which human vanity is pelted through Mr. Newte's pages by a catchword taken from the door of a pretentiously named villa pleases like an apt *Leimotiv*; and the picture he gives of the life off duty of the draper's shopgirl who "lives in" is humorous and convincing. Satire before it recoils on our author does good service to his art, his exhibition of female foibles being very amusing.

Simpson. By Elinor Mordaunt. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

THE author dedicates this book to lovers. We hardly needed the hint to enable us to foresee what would happen when the hero and his friends started a bachelors' club. Though the end appears inevitable, the book is diversified by many ingeniously devised incidents. Each man takes to the club to avoid matrimony, and each there meets his fate; some of them even exile and death. The hero himself, a delightful character, drawn with sanity and charm, has at once the most obvious and the most happy lot apportioned to him. The author writes pleasantly and with restraint, and shows some power of creating atmosphere in her descriptions of the house with its gardens, which, as the scene of events, plays an unusually prominent part in the development of the tale.

The Tracy Tubbles. By Jessie Pope. (Mills & Boon, 3s. 6d.)

It is difficult to realize that there are people with leisure which they cannot spend more satisfactorily to themselves than in reading such unrelieved farce as 'The Tracy Tubbles.' The best which can be said of it is that it is absolutely innocuous; the worst, perhaps, that it should have been very much funnier if it was to be done at all. That is not to say that it is never funny—it is sometimes. To be persistently funny is given to few of us. Yet there is a public for a book like this, which has no connexion with literature, and possibly was not intended to have any.

Monksbridge. By John Ayscough. (Chatto & Windus, 6s.)

THIS is a study of characters, told mainly by conversations. A family of four—the mother, twin daughters, and a son—have a little fortune and a house on the borders of Wales left to them unexpectedly. Here they meet a number of people, and the first fourteen chapters are taken up with the "bright" conversations by which they all make acquaintance. There is so much of this that it becomes tedious. One of the sisters possesses a calculating and managing mind, and the rest of the book is taken up with her influence over her family, and over the nobility and gentry of that part of the country. She arranges excellent marriages for herself and her mother, but her sister and brother rebel against her plans for them. The best things about the book are a few sudden, vivid descriptions, of a person speaking or of some little action, which set a whole scene before our eyes in two or three words. This clever trick of the author's—it seems no more than that—is the only thing which relieves the monotony of the book.

The Making of Blaise. By A. S. Turberville. (Sidgwick & Jackson, 6s.)

FOR a first novel this study of temperamental effects holds considerable promise. The major part of the story is concerned with Blaise's father, who was the second son of a narrow-minded father and a mother whose more broad-minded personality had suffered eclipse at the hands of her husband and elder son. Of Blaise himself we learn little, as his young life closes with the book. Of his mother we should have welcomed a more detailed account. The author, in fact, has produced half a dozen of what may be likened to crayon portraits, all of which, being lifelike and conveying well-marked traits, satisfy an artistic sense better than the curiosity which they arouse.

The Awakening. By R. S. Macnamara. (Herbert Jenkins, 6s.)

To those who buy their books straight off a stall the publisher's précis of the story on an outer cover has advantages. An author searching for an unused descriptive title deserves more sympathy

than blame if small success is obtained. This tale, which deals with a beautiful girl's first marriage to a sensualist who is crippled by an accident, and closes with her finding of a better mate, is smoothly rather than stirringly written. The end is abrupt and unsatisfactory, and leaves the reader with the impression that the number of words expected by a publisher had been attained sooner than the author expected.

It was the Time of Roses. By Dolf Wyllarde. (Holden & Hardingham, 6s.)

THIS book is an early work of its author, differing in no respect from many novels produced by cleverish young women. It possesses few of the characteristics, either good or bad, that have secured the success of her later books, and few critics would discern in it, if published without her name, the promise of much force or talent. If Miss Wyllarde is responsible for its publication in volume-form (it has already appeared as a serial), she has been somewhat inconsiderate of her own reputation; if she is not responsible, she furnishes one more warning to young writers of the dangers so which they expose themselves when they sell their copyrights, instead of selling only the right to publish for a short term of years.

Splendrum. By Lindsay Bashford. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

SPLENDRUM is a huge industry which is upheld by the personality and business capacity of its wealthy owner, and when he becomes enfeebled by drink appears to be on the verge of utter collapse. Splendrum, however, has a son—a failure at school, despised by his singularly hard-hearted father, as depicted at the beginning of the story, an incompetent, if attractive boy—who, bringing to bear the capability which he has, after all, inherited, and which we detected in the beginning in the ease with which he drives his motor, comes effectively to the rescue. It is a fairly well told story, though the lengthy speeches tempt the reader to skip, and it is at no time easy to feel much interest in the two girls who play a part in it.

The Education of Oliver Hyde. By Reginald E. Salwey. (Digby, Long & Co., 6s.)

MR. SALWEY has the gift not only of being able to make his characters live, but also of placing them before his readers with unmistakable clearness. In his latest volume he has further succeeded in hitting off the mean between plot and characterization. Both are well conceived and carried out.

Misguided maternal instinct procures a change of babies at birth, and thereby a young baronet, who proves to be an artistic genius, is kept out of his rightful position till manhood. The story deals with the discovery of the fraud. We cannot help liking Oliver, the innocent "impostor," despite his faults; and the high-minded tutor is a good study. The book itself must introduce the others.

The Girl on the Green. By Mark Allerton. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

GOLF, the militant Suffragette, a girl's college ideals, and love are the main strands in the pleasant web of this tale. The slight plot is quite workmanlike, the character-drawing sufficient, the humours happily enough conceived. The qualities the book lacks are crispness, neatness of finish, and wit; or, as alternatives, rollicking fun and genuine laughter. It is faintly infected with seriousness.

SHORT STORIES.

The Lost Road. By Richard Harding Davis. (Duckworth & Co., 6s.)

THE seven short stories collected in this volume are admirable specimens of the better sort of magazine fiction, but they lack the exuberant humour of Mr. Davis at his best. Every one of them has for its hero a sentimental American, who remains the same man, although we find him under seven different names in seven different parts of the world. There is also a certain monotony in the invariable surprise at the end. Perhaps the best story is 'The God of Coincidence,' in which the author cheerfully abandons himself to humorous improbabilities.

Firemen Hot. By C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne. (Methuen & Co., 6s.)

THE firemen are three—an Englishman, a Scotchman, and a Yankee—who will not ship except together. There is all the abundance and precision in the use of nautical or quasi-nautical terms, and in the descriptions of a vessel's behaviour, to which Mr. Hyne has accustomed his readers, combined with that grim, devil-may-care manliness which he has also the trick of depicting trenchantly. These things are good, yet not quite sufficient of themselves for the making of satisfactory short stories; and as the other material supplied here is slight, and somewhat roughly thrown together, it cannot be said that this collection is exactly of outstanding merit. One or two Kettle yarns are appended to it.

Later Litanies; and Litanies of Life. By Kathleen Watson. (Heinemann, 2s. 6d. net.)

IT is impossible to guess why the word Litany should have been chosen for these wordy, shallow, and sentimental laments. We had thought the taste for self-centred and feebly irreligious moanings had gone with the passing of the century, so that this book comes like something which is born out of its right time, if indeed there was ever a right time for such.

If the author desires to make a moving recital out of exiguous materials, we recommend to her careful study some such consummate instance as Maupassant's 'La Ficelle'; it will prove better equipment for that most difficult among hard achievements, the short story, than a plenitude of sentiment and an abundance of adjectives.

FRENCH STORIES.

L'Éveil. Par Maurice Deroure. (Paris, Plon.)

THIS is, we gather, the first work of a young author—a recruit, as he says, to "la phalange qui prépare une nouvelle renaissance." Of this renaissance much has already been written. It is, in social thought and in the individual consciousness, the return to idealism and to faith; in literature it may be said to manifest itself as the resurgence of the background—of the whole as against the parts, and as a study of the relation of individuals to that. M. Deroure follows the prevailing tendency in the new generation of writers to make the ancient Catholic religion of France the medium of contact between the individual and the whole, and its laws the means by which the claims of the whole are asserted. To this he joins, more explicitly than most, the claims of the

The situation is simple and by no means novel: a young man drawn into a passion for a married woman. The youth has been educated strictly, and has sincerely responded to the religious influences brought to bear on him; significantly these are Jansenist. Once, tempted to the very verge of falling, he is pulled back into safety by the direct force of his religion, by the obligation to perform his Easter duties. The second time—and this is an instance of fine insight—he is saved, after long strain, and at the very moment of determination to yield, by the flight of the woman. She had been amused and attracted by the boy, in the first instance at an hotel where, half in vanity, half in conscientious resolution, he had told the hotel-keeper, it being a Friday, "Je veux un dîner maigre." She had ascertained that the estrangement out of which he came back to her was caused by his having "fait ses Pâques." She confesses by a hasty retreat that there is something invincible which separates them.

M. Deroure is wholly to be congratulated on this first essay. Restraint, delicacy of touch, felicity without undue exuberance in the invention of detail, subtlety in the delineation of the two principal characters, and steadiness in progress towards the end proposed, amply atone for the slight woodenness of the minor characters.

Marcelle the Lovable. By Auguste Maquet. (Greening & Co., 6s.)

THIS is a version of 'Les Vertes-Feuilles' of Auguste Maquet, the collaborator with Dumas *père*. The translator claims for the book that it "contains a superb scoundrel and also the most adorable young woman to be met in a whole decade of French fiction." In its English dress, which fits it none too well—for in the later chapters the style halts painfully in something which is neither French nor English—the novel fails to make so distinguished an impression. The

characters, with the exceptions of Count Gilbert and Maître Cornevin, labour under a stiff unreality. The plot turns on a complicated question of estate ownership mingled with an illicit love. Some of the *sæva indignatio* expended on the amorphous love-affair might have been kept for the shady ways of the law and the lover's share therein.

Dehan (Richard), THE COST OF WINGS, AND OTHER STORIES, 6/- Heinemann

Twenty-six narratives are included in this volume, which derives its title from a story of an aviator. The author is up to date in noting the pursuits and extravagances of the time, and has a vein of cynicism which is sometimes effective and sometimes merely smart. Some of the stories are in Mr. Kipling's vein, and imitate a less agreeable side of his talent in such a phrase as "Hannover-Squared into one flesh." Details of dress and furniture are overdone. Apart from a few poignant scenes between a man and a woman, the volume is not distinguished work. The author appears to lack the zeal for concentration and selection of detail which the short story demands.

Selected English Short Stories (XIX. CENTURY), with an Introduction by Hugh Walker, 1/- net.

Oxford University Press

This addition to the "World's Classics," Pocket Edition, is very welcome, for it contains a great deal of good reading within a small space, from Walter Scott to Hubert Crackanhorpe, who died in 1896. The best work of the nineteenth century is well represented, though the work of the living is excluded. So we must suppose, though we have found no note of the fact. Mr. H. S. Milford has chosen the stories, but he and Prof. Walker share a joint responsibility for the whole book. The Introduction, which goes back as far as Genesis, spends, we think, too much time on origins before coming to the short story proper. Prof. Walker notes quite rightly the preponderance of America in this volume, about one-third of the tales being due to the United States; and even so, Mary Wilkins (still, happily, with us), the delicate work of Aldrich, and some admirable writing by Mark Twain have not found a place. The Americans are likely to keep this pre-eminence, for their magazines are much better than ours.

Coming to details, we note at once Mr. Milford's admirable taste in including 'The Two Drovers' as well as 'Wandering Willie's Tale.' The latter can be compared with 'Thrawn Janet,' which is given, as well as 'Markheim' and 'Providence and the Guitar.' Owners of copyrights have also been generous regarding stories by Richard Garnett, Gissing, and Mary Coleridge; all are striking, and will be new to many readers. 'The Witch Aunt,' by Lamb, and 'The Seven Poor Travellers' hardly seem to us to be short stories. We should have preferred one of the stories from 'Pickwick'—say, 'The Old Man's Tale of the Queer Client.' Almost all the authors here have established reputations; and we think research might have discovered an example or two by comparatively unknown hands. Prof. Walker speaks of the variety of the collection, but we find in it one striking omission: there is no story of English war, colonizing, or adventure overseas. Was there nothing worthy of the sort to be found? If it is indeed so, it was high time for Mr. Kipling to arrive.

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